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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 000419

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL NI

SUBJECT: PDP NATIONAL CHAIR ASPIRANT CONFIDENT REFORMISTS
WILL PREVAIL

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons
1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) PolOff met with Pius Anyim leading party chairmanship candidate of what might be described as the anti-Obasanjo (and self-styled "reformist") camp of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Daniel Richard, a PDP activist and something of a campaign manager for Anyim. Former President Obasanjo, who is still head of the PDP Board of Trustees (BOT) is backing Sam Egwu, a former governor for PDP Chairman. Anyim, for his part, also appears to have the support of a "godfather" of his own, former Head of State Ibrahim Babangida. Despite newspaper reports of a plot to disqualify Anyim from contesting the election and reported efforts to manipulate delegate lists, he was confident that he will win the PDP Chairmanship election, if it is open and fair. (Note: A ruling is scheduled for March 4 in a suit before the Abuja High Court brought by party members to stop the March 8 convention, asserting that it was not properly convened per party bylaws. End note.) END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Anyim and PDP activist Daniel Richard said Obasanjo is actively campaigning for Sam Egwu, former Governor of Ebonyi State, to be Chairman; they claimed there is a groundswell of support for Anyim's candidacy from numerous sitting governors in the north who realize that if Egwu wins, they will all be under Obasanjo's control or face replacement as PDP gubernatorial candidate after one term. According to Richard and Anyim, the new governors have not done as much as Obasanjo expected to protect his interests and those of his allies against investigation by the EFCC and ICPC. Indeed, in some cases, the new governors have actively supported EFCC investigations. (Note: The sitting governors will have considerable influence at the convention, since they would each bring as voting delegates ten special assistants, ten state commissioners, all the PDP members of the state assembly, as well as local party officials.)

¶3. (C) Richard and Anyim were also confident, given the secret ballot system at the convention, that when it comes

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time to cast their ballots, most delegates will opt for Anyim's promised decentralization and democratization of the party, rather than acquiescing to continued rule by fiat by the Obasanjo clique. They thus seemed unconcerned about reported attempts by current PDP National Chair and unabashed

Obasanjo ally Ahmadu Ali to vet and manipulate the lists of potential delegates and candidates.

¶14. (C) Anyim was confident that he would not be disqualified as a candidate and doubted that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) would again postpone the PDP national convention, although he considered a court injunction postponing it a possibility. (Note: INEC has the authority to determine not only the timetable for presidential elections, but also for political party elections. End note.) Subsequently, three members of the PDP filed suit against the party in the Abuja High Court. The three, Alhaji Abdullahi Maibirgi, Chief Iroha, Hajia Ceceko Asmau Ahmed who claim to represent a group dubbed the "Renaissance PDP" maintain that the party national convention must be convened by the National Central Working Committee as outlined in the party constitution, and not by the National Executive Committee. The case is set to be decided March 4.

¶15. (SBU) According to press reports, Anyim enjoys substantial support from members of the Integrity Group, a group of pro-reform PDP members from the House of Representatives, and G-21, another group of current and former members of both chambers of the National Assembly who have attempted to remove Obasanjo from his leadership position within the PDP, though Anyim has not been formally endorsed. Party Chairman Ali and Obasanjo did not help Egwu's candidacy by their alleged shoddy treatment and disrespect of Speaker of the House Bankole during the recent meeting of the PDP National Executive Committee. In retaliation, many PDP members in the House of Representatives have pledged in the press to vote as a bloc for Anyim. (Note: Speaker Bankole's father, a respected party elder, is also a founder and active member of the G-21.)

¶16. (C) COMMENT: The current goings on in the PDP are as much (if not more so) a struggle for influence amongst competing factions as they are about reform or maintaining the status quo, meaning acts of illicit enrichment, intimidation and autocracy. Political maneuverings and intrigues are in full swing in Nigeria, as pro- and anti-Obasanjo camps compete for advantage at ward and local government congresses in advance of the March 8 convention, many of which have been marred by violence. There are no fewer than 25 declared candidates for PDP National Chairman. If Anyim is to be believed, he may in fact have a plurality of votes if not an absolute majority, though the existence of so many challengers may dilute the anti-Obasanjo vote, at least in early ballots. The reformist mood among many in the party would seem to work to Anyim's advantage. Various press reports suggest Anyim also has the less savory political backing of former president and powerbroker Ibrahim Babangida (IBB) as well as former Board of Trustees Chair and ex-Obasanjo ally Tony Anenih, who was unceremoniously supplanted by Obasanjo as BOT Chair when the latter stepped down as president. Many observers think IBB is supporting Anyim for party Chairman as the first step in his own political comeback. A court judgment to postpone the convention would presumably also mean that the amendment to the party by-laws regarding eligibility requirements for chairmanship of the party's BOT (which currently eliminate all but Obasanjo from consideration) would again be in play, as the petition will have been submitted two months prior to the convention, and thus eligible for consideration. END COMMENT.
SANDERS